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554 635 Considerable reduction has been the lot of the title "ras", which in the past stood for not only military marshall, but often dynastic head of a province with private armies loyal only to him, and therefore often in competition with the throne. Of the old dynastic nobilities, the following heads still hold the title "ras":

Ras Kassa and Ras Imru, both kinsmen of the present emperor; Ras Haylu of the provincial dynasty of Gojjam, who is under close supervision; Ras Seyum of the provincial dynasty of Tigre, also under close control; Ras Gäbre Haywot of Dessie province, a kinsman of the present empress. A non-member of the old dynasties has been advanced to "ras" for loyal service: Ras Abebe, war hero and now minister of war.

554 562 Young noblemen who have mastered the art of horsemanship, as they are expected to, still assume a "war name", called "färäs sem" (lit. horse name), and name their favorite steed accordingly, much like medieval knights. For example, Emperor Menelik II could be politely addresses as "Abba Daño" (lit. Father of Judgment, his horse name) which he had assumed as a young man, after which his battle horse "daño" was named, and which flattered him both by emphasizing his position as the country's supreme ruler and judge, and by referring to his admired record as victor in many difficult battles. Emperor Haile Selassie I assumed the horse name "Abba Taqlay" (lit. he enveloped, i.e. the enemy) when a young nobleman, but no longer uses it.

552 A favorite horse name was "Abba Dulla" (lit. father of a tough weed), named after a weed that is difficult to uproot, and that regrows despite efforts to the contrary.

714 Although rhinoceros shields have not been used for at least 20 years and with them has gone the job of the personal shieldbearer, the term "gashay"(my shield) is still used appealingly toward any male protector or paternal figure, especially by young men or by women of any age. Conversely, an older man may refer to his junnior trusted aide as "gasha jägrey", my shieldbearer.

579 Banditry (shefta), much reduced in recent years by harsh measures requiring the use of the army and capital punishment, still appears occasionally as a form of social protest. In the past, when a minor nobleman felt unjustly treated by a feudal superior, e.g. passed over in promotion, he would often "take to the bush" with his retainers, pillaging and even murdering, hoping that his ferocity would either intimidate the ruler of the province to negotiate with him, or arouse his desire to re-enlist so brave a bandit. Guerilla activities during the Italian occupation by these Amhara "arbañoch" (lit. patriots, self-styled), led the Italians to attempt negotiations on several occasions. It was difficult to demobilize some of the disappointed, irregulars, some of whom turned shefta after the war. Since then, peasants short of cash or unhappy about parting with much produce at tax-paying time, sometimes turn into highwaymen temporarily. It is the duty of the rural, non-uniformed police ("mägh läbash), the "thiefcatchers-

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X794 rainy season, when they hover in the confinement of their grottoes just
T76 as Abyssinians in their huts. Like humans, zar spirits become active
821 soon after the rains, when the "Mäsqäl" feasts approach, the yellow flowers carpet the landscape and the green grain begins to mature. The favorite time for zar spirits to strike is between midnight and about 3 A.M.; but some individualistic spirits specialize in the hour of sunset, and some even midday.

X794 Belief in the curative powers of the zar doctors is still widespread and strong among the Amhara. Only in the city of Addis Ababa has the present government tried to subdue it, so that devotees have to travel away from the city, for their major reunions. Many men do not like
X794 to admit their belief in the zar spirits or that they themselves consult
562 zar doctors. This is because of the feminine emphasis of the zar cult. Women are more often possessed, and do not hesitate to admit it; they often seem to look forward to cult membership. Grown men, however, unless afflicted with an ailment as obvious as epilepsy, are ashamed to be seen in a cult group, especially when the cult doctor is a woman. The major exceptions are the brothers of the woman zar doctor, who are often almost as pixilated by inheritance and contact with their mother as the doctor herself; the zar poet and hymn-composer who is usually a man; and the hired drummer.

b. Characteristics and Attributes of Male and Female "Zar" Spirits.

X794 The organization of the male zar spirits is more complex than that
T76 of the female ones. Moreover, several male zar spirits arrogate names
552 to themselves that otherwise are generic: e.g. "Gurëza" - usually generic for all male zars; "Weqäbe"- usually generic for all protective spirits;

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"Wadaj" for male zars that specialize in possessing women; "Wureza" for subordinate zars. Female zars are regarded as "undisciplined" and rarely organize.

The names are often personalizations of characteristics and attributes of the zars. Others are terms of flattery designed to render the zar benevolent; or based on the home region of the zar. In some cases a zar spirit has "ordered" concealment of his real name, so that a new name has had to be abstracted from Amharic, or Geez, or Arabic, or a syncretic mutilation of all three languages. Some zars prefer to be addressed by their "färäs sem" (knighthood name). Some zars, of Galla Muslim or Amharic Christian affiliation, insist that their name indicate their religious and ethnic identification. Sometimes the meaning of the name is lost, or cannot be traced readily because it is in "zar language" - itself largely a mutilation of Amharic, though this is not admitted. Finally, the poet who performs in the zar cult may think up new adjectives to describe the hoped-for benevolence of the zar, whereupon the zar spirit, pleased, adopts the adjedtive as a byname, or name, decreeing that henceforth he be addressed this way.